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Advocate of Peace.

VOL. LXV.

BOSTON, SEPTEMBER, 1902.

No. 9

THE AMERICAN PEACE SOCIETY,
PUBLISHERS,
31 BEACON STREET, BOSTON, MASS.

MONTHLY, ONE DOLLAR PER YEAR. TEN CENTS PER COPY.

Entered at the Boston Post Office as Second Class Matter.

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Inauguration of the Work of the Hague Court.

This month of September is hereafter to be memorable in the history of the organization of international peace. The four members of the Hague Court chosen by the United States and Mexico, namely, Sir Edward Fry of England, F. de Martens of Russia, Dr. Lohman of The Netherlands, and Chief Justice Guarnaschelli of Italy, are to meet at The Hague the first of the month and select the fifth member of the Court to complete the board of arbitrators for the adjustment of the "Pious Fund" question. Later in the month they will begin the hearing of the case, and the practical work of the international tribunal will be begun.

It is useless to hunt for adjectives to try to make people feel the immense significance of this event. A few will see and appreciate it; millions will not.

It is most interesting and instructive to recall with what extraordinary rapidity the movement which has thus culminated has gone forward recently. It is only four years and a few days since the Emperor of Russia handed to the foreign representatives at his capital the now famous Rescript of August, 1898. How much has happened in that brief period! When this Rescript was made public it set all the world to talking, to wondering, to

exulting, to sneering. Almost nobody knew what to think, or could guess what would become of it. It is doubtful if any man was then living who imagined, even in the most general way, that the outcome would be what it has been. Most people thought then that nothing would come of it, that the whole thing was chimerical. A few people expected something, but they did not know what.

In spite of all this skepticism, doubt and uncertainty, the Conference met in the following May. When the hundred delegates who had come together began to hold consultation, they found out immediately that, while the matter of disarmament was not ripe for action, there was one subject which imperiously demanded their attention, that, namely, of a permanent system of international arbitration. This demand came from the United States, from Great Britain, from France, from Russia, from Italy, from Switzerland and from elsewhere, where for a hundred years arbitration had been doing its beneficent work and gathering for itself a powerful constituency. It then became clear to these hundred men, and to the rest of the thoughtful world, why the Conference had met.

After ten weeks of earnest, patient, comprehensive and critical labor, the Conference brought forth the Convention for the Pacific Settlement of International Controversies, the most important international document ever drafted. The principal feature of the Convention, as everybody ought now to know, was the provision for the creation of a permanent international court of arbitration. This document was signed by the representatives of the twenty-six powers which had sent delegates, and was forwarded to the governments at home. Would the Convention be ratified? That was then the critical question. Or would the whole thing turn out to be a gigantic world-farce? Many were sure it would.

Two years passed, and one after another of the signatory powers ratified the Convention and appointed members of the prospective court, until sixteen of them had done so. Then the Netherlands Minister of Foreign Affairs, with whom the ratifications had been deposited, in April last year notified the signatory powers that the requisite number of governments had acted, and that the Court with its Bureau and Administrative Council was duly constituted.

Another year passed. Six more of the powers

sent in ratifications and chose members of the Court. Meanwhile men were skeptically declaring that the Court had fallen still-born, that it was doing nothing, that a court which did not stop wars, that had no disputes brought before it, was null and void.

Now the fourth great step in this Hague Conference work, after only the brief space of four years from its commencement, has been taken, and by the time these lines reach the reader, the Court will be actually at work, in the manner described above, on its first case. It is a marvelous record for four years. There is scarcely any story of swift achievement like it in the whole history of civilization. Into four years has been crowded, not so much by the special efforts of men as by the accumulated force of civilization working spontaneously and irresistibly, what men believed, and not irrationally, it would take generations if not centuries to accomplish. People ought to read, re-read, and ponder the story until they grasp, as far as is possible at the present time, something of its full significance.

Now that the Court is an accomplished fact, it is said by men—even men of the greatest intelligence and highest character—who fear that the movement is going too fast to give substantial and permanent results, that the supreme test of the value of this tribunal will come when some critical controversy of the first order comes up between two first-class powers. Behind what they say is the unuttered thought that the Court will then be ignored and prove valueless. We may well leave the redemption of these men from their fear to the logic of events. This logic is sure to be against them. This great institution of reason and law, the child of the ages, the last and largest organized expression of the heart and brain, and of the moral life of the world, is not going to wither away and collapse when some hour of emergency comes. It is too late for men to take counsel of their fears in this way.

The Mimic Coast War.

So long as armies and navies exist, it must be taken as a matter of course that whatever of training and practice is necessary to keep them efficient will be indulged in; but citizens who pay the bills, whether opponents of the navy or its supporters, certainly have the right to expect that the practice exercises shall be for their purpose legitimate ones, and not employed for sinister ends or turned into grotesque and absurd mimicry.

It has been a long time since the country has been treated to so extraordinary a bit of opera bouffe on a national scale as that of the recent mock attack and defense of our coast. That this mimic warfare has been meant either to give actual training or to test that already possessed is hard to believe. Think of sending out *three* small cruisers to attack and

make a landing somewhere on a *hundred* miles of coast, limiting their points of entrance to the few harbors deep enough for the largest ships of war, and then expecting them to get in without discovery by some one of a fleet of more than a dozen high-class vessels guarding that section of coast and on the lookout for them! The veriest land-lubber, it would seem, could devise a better test of efficiency than that.

How much about actual warfare is learned by the big ships and the little torpedo boats racing through the waters like mad, drawing up ready for broadsides, but never firing a shot; by the booming of big guns, belching out nothing but smoke and noise; by the manipulation for a week of the coast ordnance against an "enemy" who knows every corner in the fortifications, but whose threats of attack will all be shams; by the sinking of big ships which are never sunk; by surrenders in classic form when there is nothing to surrender.

An hour of actual attack on the coast would knock the heels from under all these dummy performances and show their practical valuelessness. Whatever training in coöperation, observation and promptness of service these exercises may give—and they will have their limited value in this direction—may be just as easily had in the ordinary work of the navy and the forts without the grotesqueness and the immense extra expense of this sham fighting.

What are the purposes, then, of the "war game" to which the country has been treated? Why has it come just at the present time, when the navy is clamoring for more men and the President on his "official" trip has been sounding in glowing rhetoric the matchlessness of the fleet? A prominent writer "who knows," as everybody with eyes and ears open knows, has declared it to be twofold, to let Germany and the "rest of them" know that we are really able to defend our coasts against any attacks which they may have in mind to deliver, and, secondly, to awaken among the people enthusiasm for the navy.

The first of these purposes can hardly be anything more than a part of the general sham or a mere ruse in support of the naval enthusiasm scheme. How much more about our ability to defend our coasts does anybody suppose the German Emperor and his naval folk will know after this mimic attack than they already knew? And why should we wish to teach them, when there is not the shadow of a reason for believing that they have any design against us? If this part of the program of the promoters has any seriousness in it, it is an exhibition of the chip-on-the-shoulder policy, now entirely too much in evidence with some of our citizens, intended to provoke and irritate Germany or some other power, and thus to prepare the way for the war which some are bent on having.